WCCO-TV-35W BRIDGE COLLAPSE -2:06 P.M -2:57 P.M (8-2-2007)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=13qbAC6oGeI (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=13qbAC6oGeI)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=13qbAC6oGeI)

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From Thursday, August 2nd, 2007 WCCO-TV (CBS) Live coverage of the I-35W Bridge collapse over the Mississippi river in Minneapolis, MN

- The Collapse occurred at 6:05 P.M, injuring 145 people and killing 13.

- Coverage runs from 2:06 P.M - 2:57 P.M

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[Music] [Applause] hello i'm don shelby we're breaking into regular programming to bring you a live press conference the minnesota department of transportation is ready to update us with the latest information on the bridge collapse well we know now four dead as many as 30 people still missing 79 injured governor tim pawletti is heading off this uh this news conference let's go to him right now a couple of questions but i need to go to the emergency operations center and take care of some other items so i will come back as part of a 415 press availability so if you have some follow-up questions for me i'll be available then as well but i'll turn it over in just a few moments to federal and state department of transportation officials who will make some presentation about the technical aspects of bridge inspections and bridge construction and bridge repair and the like we hope that that will be helpful to you and they will try to answer all of your questions as well today earlier i announced some action steps regarding the direction to mndot to take some steps i want to make sure that you know what those are first of all i have directed mndot to hire an outside firm to conduct a parallel investigation to the ntsb we have every confidence and belief that the ntsb will do a professional and terrific job at investigating this matter but we want redundancy and we want to make sure that nothing gets missed so they have hired the firm of wis janie and elsner that's the w i s s janey j a n n e y and elsner e l s t n e r to perform that function they are forensic engineers they have a long and involved history in forensic engineering including doing a review of the boston big dig problems that they had in the wake of that number two i've directed the minnesota department of transportation to hire an outside firm to review stem to stern all of their inspection practices and

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all of their inspection practices and protocols and procedures they're in the process of identifying the firm and obviously will be involved in improving that to conduct that review stem discern of all inspection procedures protocols and timelines number three i've instructed mndot to conduct emergency inspections of bridges in priority order starting with the bridges that have a same or similar design in minnesota at this point we believe there are three of them they are as follows trunk highway 23 located near saint cloud trunk highway 123 located near sandstone trunk highway 243 located near osceola over by the saint croix river valley those three will be of course first on the list in addition i've asked them to conduct emergency and urgent inspections of all the remaining bridges who are on this list that you've all heard of called structurally deficient and state and federal officials will give you more information about what that means that term or that definition and i think we provided it earlier but if you have further questions on that they'll be available to help you we also have some additional data that might be helpful to you there was some 2004 federal data that's been cited in the media about the number of bridges the categories that they fall in around the nation and in here in minnesota i'll share with you some 2007 minnesota data you should know that the federal data is not you know independent they take the data from the state and then do an assessment of it but the data that's actually collected on the ground is almost entirely exclusively minnesota data so this data is from mndot it will be shared with the federal government of course they'll do additional assessments from then there are approximately 13 026 total bridges in minnesota that includes both state and local bridges of that there are 106 state bridges in this category of structurally deficient and there are about a little over a thousand bridges in total including all the local bridges that fall into that category you should know as to this

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category you should know as to this particular uh project that they should say this particular tragedy the firm that i mentioned earlier will do a stem to stern analysis of this failure of this bridge as well as the other things that i mentioned now with respect to the failure of this bridge we've mentioned before that there were inspections done in 2005 and 2006 also a at least the beginnings of a review in 2007 in short what those inspections show and the mndot folks and the federal folks can get into more detail is while there were concerns about the stress and fatigue and aspects of this bridge mndot has informed me that it did not result in a calling for an immediate replacement or closure or weight limitations or other restrictions on the bridge there were concerns noted but it didn't rise to that type of level as to the 2005-2006 inspections in 2007 there was also a review underway that was done in conjunction with mndot and a consulting firm that gave mndot some options as to the bridge they chose an option regarding additional inspections which what this 2007 review was undertaking to do obviously there's going to be a lot of tough questions and hard questions first and foremost for me as well as from the press and from everyone else and we will absolutely get to the bottom of this there were a lot of decisions made a lot of judgment calls made and they're all going to have to be critically reviewed and of course those are all going to go back and be revisited with the benefit of hindsight with that i'm just going to take a couple of questions but really the point of this gathering is to make the experts available to you from an engineering standpoint and the like and then again if you have follow-up questions for me i'll make myself available to you at 4 15 and at other times as well that the state engineers assessment that the bridge didn't need to be replaced that they were correct in 2006. i should

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that they were correct in 2006. i should say it this way pat i think there was a view that the bridge was ultimately and eventually going to need to be replaced but it appears on the information we have available that the timeline for that was not immediate or imminent it was more in the future and that's what they were working towards and planning towards government you're exactly right that's one of the limiting factors of the recovery effort at this point we know there are vehicles downstream and upstream as well the currents are very challenging as well as the debris in the water that is hampering the rescue efforts the search and rescue or the the recovery team and leaders have determined that they're going to do this as quickly as possible but they can't do it at risking the lives of the searchers and the divers and that's the limiting factor the army corps of engineers is involved they're part of the the team that's helping to make these decisions but one issue is what to do if anything about the current of the river and they are looking into that governor there's a list of bridges in this state that is prioritized for replacement the bridge maintenance people i asked them this afternoon if they would tell us where this bridge ranked on that list and they told me that they have the ranking and they know where it was listed but that it's considered private information can you well i don't i don't agree with that assessment rick and we'll certainly try to make that available to you in terms of the trying to make that available or public governor what's your understanding about what made this bridge structurally efficient i mean i know we're going to hear from you yeah what is your general understanding are these fatigue cracks are they expansion cracks well i have worked hard today to make sure we get a

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sure we get a understandable definition of structurally deficient and uh i'm not the best person to answer that but i'll give you my take on it it includes whether on any of these measures of the federal assessment you score a four or lower and there was three or four categories of assessment on this bridge in one of the categories it got a four and i think that related to the superstructure but in addition there's a definition of structural deficiency as it relates to whether there has been things like weight limits placed on the bridge whether it needs quote-unquote immediate rehabilitation and or or i should say some other considerations so you can get this label in a variety of ways you should know that there are 70 to 80 000 bridges in the united states who have this designation and an equal or greater number who have uh equally troubling designations in other categories so it's important that you remember that the secretary of transportation told me last night and uh told us again this morning that that designation does not uh presuppose uh necessarily that the bridge was dangerous or was in need of immediate replacement it has a certain other implications but in this case based on what we know right now we don't have an indication that the experts who reviewed this thought it needed to be immediately closed or imminently replaced work needed to be done and inspections and options were presented but it didn't fall in that category now with the benefit of hindsight we're going to go back and ask tough questions was that the appropriate recommendation should they have made a different recommendation and that's going to be part of this investigation and review that we're ordering by this outside firm this will be the last one anything in this incident speak to the need for you and the legislature to get together and come to something mutually acceptable and some transportation funding package that everybody can win uh yes sir clearly and i've been spending even before this happened time with legislative leaders on a transportation funding package in fact ironically yesterday i met with my

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fact ironically yesterday i met with my staff about a whole variety of options on that front for the next legislative session i think it's important to know though that given what we know now that this bridge wasn't imminently scheduled for replacement not on money but on engineering looking at a 2020 type of horizon that even if a bill would have passed a year ago or two years ago you know it doesn't look like this bridge would have been replaced in the near or imminent term on transportation or infrastructure you know i am committed to do anything and everything that is needed to first of all make sure that this rescue effort is done and done well and done completely that the ntsb and these investigations that i've outlined here this morning are done well and done exhaustively that the reconstruction takes place uh as uh urgently and promptly as possible and we will do anything and everything it takes to make that happen including the possibility of a special session i'll also tell you that in my discussions with the secretary of transportation that they've committed uh essentially unlimited resources uh to us now of course that has to be go through congress and all of that but we're gonna have a very helpful partner it seems in that regard i will make myself available to you additionally at 4 15 and at other times but i think it's important to hear from the technical experts on their perspective imminently in danger obviously it would be closed or other actions would be taken thanks guys bob mcfarlane can address that but i think we're talking about a matter of days or a week but i'll defer to him on that path i want to introduce bob mcfarlane who's one of our leaders the minnesota department of transportation

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department of transportation if you could just be patient with your questions until he's able and some others are able to make a presentation we know it's hot he'll try to do it uh quickly and then he'll take your questions bob okay thank you thank you [Music] as the governor said i'm bob mcfarlane with the minnesota department of transportation i'm assistant to the commissioner for policy and public affairs on behalf of lieutenant governor mulnow lieutenant governor commissioner mulnow and the entire mndot family i want to take this opportunity to express our sincere condolences and and heartfelt wishes to the families of those who lost loved ones and to those who are injured okay expressing our mndot's condolences to those who have lost loved ones and those who are injured by this tragedy we're going to provide you first i want to just mention some have asked this question lieutenant governor commissioner mulnow was in beijing last evening when this tragedy occurred she was contacted by mndot staff she is on her way back and left china immediately and is expected to be back in minnesota around 7 30 or 8 o'clock this evening for for that bit of information we're going to try and provide you some information related to a lot of questions that have been asked today regarding bridge inspections structural deficiency classifications how we do bridge inspections and how we partner with the federal highway administration and the usdot on ensuring safe bridges across minnesota and across the country i believe lucy kender has given most of you the names of people who are going to speak today we have a number of experts they'll introduce themselves or i will introduce them as they come forward the first person who is going to speak is dan dorgan he will cover a number of issues related to the history of this bridge its inspection history its classification as a structurally deficient bridge and the governor i want to remind you as the governor mentioned there are some close to 80 000 bridges

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there are some close to 80 000 bridges in the country that carry that classification and so dan dorgan mndot's bridge engineer we'll talk to you a little bit about that and then we'll have some information from the federal highway administration dan thank you bob good afternoon okay i'd like to start with giving you a little information on the history of the bridge a brief history of it a construction began in 1964 on this structure it was completed in 1967 and opened to traffic the company that built the structure was industrial construction uh was the contractor the bridge type is a steel arch truss it's an under deck truss meaning it's supported from below there was two arches that supported this bridge the traffic on the bridge was 141 000 cars a day on average so it was a heavily traveled structure some information on the inspection history on this bridge we have conducted yearly inspections since 1993 prior to that time we construct we conducted inspections every two years on this structure but starting in 1993 we went to an annual inspection in 1990 it was classified as a structurally deficient bridge which is a federal description and we'll go into that a little bit later this particular bridge was structurally deficient initially due to uh corrosions of the bearings so that they were not able to uh move as freely as we uh as designed um since that time um as the years have passed we've also had some corrosion of the steel around the joints of the bridge and there were in the approach spans not in the main river spans but in the approach spans we did have fatigue uh cracks the in the 1990s that were repaired

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1990s that were repaired uh recent inspections in 2005 and 2006 uh and and again we checked this every year we found no evidence of additional cracking in the bridge or growth in the pre-existing cracks there was cracks that were present in the welds what we call the tab welds of the bridge since the day it was built but those did not were not growing and they were stable so for those reasons we considered the bridge fit for service several studies have been conducted on the bridge in recent years beginning with a 2001 study by the university of minnesota or actually by dr robert dexter of the university of minnesota who was a recognized fatigue expert the findings of a doctor wreck dr dexter's research at the time was that fatigue cracking was not expected in the dec trust that we could expect continued years of service from that structure and and one of the reasons for conducting these studies was again the traffic volume of 141 000 cars a day it was our busiest bridge within the state we conducted a further re study from 2004 to 2007 with a urs corporation again that was an in-depth study of the fatigue potential with additional modeling and load testing um or i should take that back with additional modeling of the bridge more in depth than the 2001 study the outcome of that study was two alternatives that we received this year from urs to consider one was to ensure again um continued service in the bridge um because we were we were looking forward to the

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forward to the the year of around 2020 when we would either need to redeck or replace the bridge so we were trying to address the issue if the bridge would be fit for service at that time i mean whether we could redeck it so the two alternatives we were given were to add steel plates to the critical members to reinforce them was one route to go a second route to go was to construct or conduct rather a thorough inspection of the welds inside the box to determine if any cracks in again those tab welds inside the box that were present since it was built were propagating we chose the inspection route in may we began inspections of the bridge had the bridge partially inspected this year and we were going to complete that this fall there was construction going on in the bridge so we were going to wait till construction completed to finish that inspection the results of that inspection were that no growth in any of the pre-existing weld cracks were found so that is that is the history of the recent inspections of it i'd like to spend a little time again bob and the governor mentioned uh structurally deficient explaining that term structurally deficient is a term that was developed by federal highways for purposes of the national bridge inspection system that all states comply with and conduct their inspections bridges are inspected regularly on either a one or a two year basis or two year cycle around the country and there's a rating scale that inspectors are given it's a rating scale that goes from one to nine with nine being a bridge in excellent condition so if you a structurally deficient bridge is a bridge that would have a rating of four in either the deck that's the um the deck is what one drives upon uh the superstructure which would be the

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uh the superstructure which would be the the portion of the bridge spanning from peer-to-peer supporting the bridge or the sub structure any one of those in condition four or less the bridge is considered structurally deficient this bridge was considered structurally deficient and it was four classified that way as i mentioned earlier for the for the reasons i mentioned the the bearing issue um the fact that we had had fatigue in the approach spans but it repaired it and then also the corrosion um in minnesota out of out of 13 000 bridges that are 20 foot and over in span and that's the federal definition 1160 approximately are structurally deficient that's about eight percent of the state's bridges of those the minnesota d.o.t the trunk highway portion of those is 106. so about three percent of the trunk highway bridges are structurally deficient and again this was one of those groups comparing that nationally for a point of reference nationally there's over 77 000 bridges structurally deficient and that's about 13 of the country's bridges how many are those in the metro area and actually um with that uh i've covered the items that i intended to cover bob did you want to take questions now nope okay to provide a little bit further information on the items that dan just covered i'd like to introduce tom everett of the federal highway administration and he's in particular with the national bridge inventory program and he will talk about the inventory program and the definitions of structurally deficient and other definitions within the federal highway perspective thank you and i just keep my comments brief and limited to basically two areas and with one correction it's the

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and with one correction it's the national bridge inspection program the national bridge inventory being one part of that overall program but first i just wanted to echo what what mr dorgan described relative to the definition of structurally deficient from the federal highway perspective we view that term as a programmatic classification rather than an indication of level of safety as was also indicated is not an uh a number that or a classification that indicates the bridge is dangerous a bridge is dangerous nor that that bridge is it must be replaced it's just for us a a programmatic classification now with respect to the national bridge inventory that is the database that we maintain the federal highway administration that contains data over 100 pieces of data for all bridges in the united states with a bridge being over 20 feet in length it's essentially as it gets reported to us in our database a collection of of some descriptive terms such as feature carried by a bridge facilities intersected as well as some numerical ratings that you heard mr dorgan describe as an example the condition rating of a bridge deck or condition rating of a bridge superstructure it would be a single number and we would generate or can generate from that national bridge inventory a report on just that limited data the hundred or so items that get reported to us in the national bridge inventory so with that i think i'll next mndot's metro district engineer connie saheb gem will talk about the type of construction work that was going on on the bridge at the time of collapse and uh why don't we cover that right now and he'll be back to talk about another item in a minute thank you bob again my name is connie so i have jam metro district engineer i would like to cover three things and anticipating your

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three things and anticipating your questions one is about the construction project that's been going on on the uh out there on the bridge it was a nine million dollar project which included uh about seven six and a half million dollars of roadway patchwork and about two and a half million dollars of the nine million is a work actually on the on the bridge and the work on the bridge consists of patching and overlaying and some some joint repairs and the anticipated completion of that project was september toward the end of september september 30th the next thing i'd like to cover is uh obviously we have detoured a lot of a lot of routes and you've gotten some information on that the information that i've received this morning traffic went real well although there's reasons for that people probably stayed away from the area or didn't go to work or took different routes and uh and we're contin continuously monitoring the traffic flow and what we've done to temporary routes we're looking at over the next couple of years as this bridge is under construction we're looking at temporary fixes to increase capacities in areas uh using shoulders and doing some unconventional ways so i hope the the travelers will watch our signs and we want to increase our throughput through our system as much as possible again all of that will be monitored daily through our cameras uh the third thing uh one last thing i'd like to cover is where we're going from here how we're going to get a contract together when are we going to start construction we have a team established already in conjunction with uh with the city of minneapolis to work on a procurement a contract to hire a contractor a designer and a contractor to get this project on the road as as quick as possible

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as possible we have ways of doing this fairly quick however we have to uh we have an investigation going on out there on the river and as the ntsb is doing the investigation and as this and when we get permission to remove the structure that's when we can uh start to start the construction so and that work is uh going forward and and hopefully we can get out there pretty soon we are we are determining obviously what the size the structure will be and the lanes and things like that so that'll be all figured out over the next uh few weeks so uh with that bob i think i'll give it back to you so just to wrap up the presentation before questions uh in addition to what the governor announced earlier in terms of the immediate steps uh we're continuing to assist uh in the recovery operation that's being coordinated by the city of minneapolis and the minneapolis fire department we will be assisting the ntsb and they have already begun their investigation we're providing any assistance they request along with the redundant the redundant investigation that we will begin and initiate ourselves and as connie said we're preparing now for uh the reconstruction of this bridge uh following the the recovery and the the debris removement and and hoping to get a bridge reconstructed there and get traffic flowing as quickly as possible i want to mention we have also with us to answer questions tom sorell who is with the federal highway administration he is a local federal highway administrator administ administration administrator for minnesota and lisa freese deputy commissioner for mndot is also here uh to answer questions so with that we'll open questions talk a little bit about the inspections around the state how soon they start how fully done how do they differ from inspections already going on briefly and they'll let dan do it in

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briefly and they'll let dan do it in more detail we are initiating the inspections for the three bridges that the governor talked about immediately and we hope to have those done within a matter of of a week in days rather than longer we will be initiating the effort to hire an outside consultant to review our inspecting inspection practices and to help us in inspecting other bridges beyond those three we'll be initiating that immediately that'll take a little bit longer to get on the ground as we identify uh identify a consultant and and uh identify their scope of work and with uh dan mona let me take a little bit um regarding the question on these inspections the those bridges would have been inspected in the last few years we just think it's prudent since the structure type is similar um that there are quite a bit smaller structures they aren't of the magnitude of of the 35w bridge but nevertheless since they're of the same structure type we want to send our crews out and conduct an immediate inspection on that to try to assure ourselves we have we have no issues with the bridge we have we have no reason to believe there are issues but uh again we think that's a prudent step among many that we're taking are you worried why should the public be um well i think as mr mcfarland laid out we've got a combination of things we're doing first of all our inspectors will be looking at these immediately we're also going to retain uh independent inspection of our fracture critical bridges throughout the state so there we will have a new set of eyes to look at it and and to to verify or what we have done in the past or alert us if there are issues is there any reason to believe that something fell through the cracks here

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something fell through the cracks here or is it pretty clear to you on the face of it that you did well in light of what happened you know i would say we thought we had done all we could obviously something went terribly wrong and that's going to be part of the forensic investigation for us to try to figure out what went wrong in this instance can you talk to us about what creates these cracks is the temperature variance i mean in minnesota obviously we go from 40 below to i think 140 surface temperature on the roads so that's what's creating these fissure cracks well typically our fracture critical bridges that have uh have these types of issues around the country were designed in an era usually 1950s 1960s before fatigue was thought to be a problem in bridge structures the engineering industry knew of fatigue there was ships in world war ii there was jet aircraft that had had fatigue in the 1950s but up until the 1960s or late 1960s it was thought that fatigue was not a phenomenon you would see in bridges unfortunately that was a wrong assumption so some of the construction practices used in that era the way they welded members together those engineers did the best they could but they were not aware of the issue and it started to manifest itself probably in about the middle 1970s we started to see problems across the country and that that's what has caused us to across the country to go to what we call fracture critical inspections which are in arm's length inspection meaning that you get with within an arm's length of the the critical details you need to inspect excuse me let me finish this question temperature variance it's probably more an issue of truckloads over time and the accumulation of truckloads temperature can add to that issue also that gentleman's question is

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[Music] um at this time we don't have any reason to believe those those issues are tied the work that the contractor is doing out there or was doing out there was to replace the concrete overlay also to repair deck joints so all that work was was up on top of the bridge and the failure that occurred would have been down in the superstructure somewhere to cause this type of collapse yes there'll be lane closures as we get our snooper trucks out there um we at this time we were not intending we to close them we do not we're not aware of any problems or have a reason to believe it again it's just a prudent step to take sort of a belt and suspenders on top of our previous inspections excuse me just a second on those three bridges i there's there have been a couple of media requests to repeat what the governor said uh on those three bridges the three bridges that are going to be immediately inspected because they are of similar structure to to the 35w bridge the trunk highway 23 bridge near saint cloud over the mississippi river the trunk highway 120 trunk highway 123 bridge near sandstone over the kettle river and the trunk highway 243 bridge near osceola across the saint croix does everybody have that trunk highway 23 and saint cloud over the mississippi river trunk highway 123 near sandstone over the kettle river trunk highway 243 near osceola over the saint croix river i want to repeat that is simply because they are of a similar nature to this bridge there is no uh reason no no other reason

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there is no uh reason no no other reason suspected reason of concern with those bridges other than they are similar structures what is that similar structure well i'll let the engineer do that again yes again this type of structure is a truss bridge that is under the deck of the bridge and it has an arch configuration so we we call it a deck truss um an archdeck truss um there are very few of them in minnesota as as uh given that we only had four and there's no support underneath it is that also what makes it different well well there are no there are pil pures in the river in fact um 35 w bridge had one pure in the water and in these other bridges without looking at them i'd can't recall how many piers might be in the water so as the arch spans it spans between piers so there are there are fears in the water this bridge was uh well it went to contract in 1964. what era is the design from it would be early yes it would have been designed probably in the in the two years or so prior to construction [Music] the sandstone bridge is considerably older i think that is more a world war ii vintage is my recollection um i would have to get the dates on the other two structures does that reflect the problems that were like discovered first crack or do they describe some problems that cropped up since the 1980s no the the fatigue cracking that occurred was not in the main river spans it was in the approach spans and that was in the 1990s and repairs were made at that time the additional cracks that have always been present in the bridge were due to the welding processes used back in the 1960s those had not propagated we had been monitoring those for years and they were not not lengthening

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well the the configuration of this bridge had a number of beam approach spans until you came to the main river and then it was an arch over the main river for a longer span the span was approximately 500 foot and had you completed your inspection so far this year you said you know it started but because you weren't able to complete it had you not completed we covered areas of the trust that would have been critical um we were inspecting and i believe it was the west side truss um and were worked from the south shore out to about mid river or a little bit past mid river and again our intent was to come back after the contractor was off the bridge and finish that inspections are a combination again they're fracture critical so the person is with arm's length or closer to uh to observe if they see evidence of what they suspect excuse me suspect is a crack they do non-destructive testing which which means they use various methods to to determine how length the crack is how long it is how deep it is and how long it has existed the inspections are done by mndot staff you mentioned corrosion and other findings in 1990 that led to it being strongly division were those other things also addressed in 1990 and secondly has this bridge been classified as structural efficiency since 1990 yes it has been struck to remain structurally deficient [Music]

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it has remained structurally deficient since 1990 it has to be patrol the i was just going to finish this question and and the reason um since we did experience the cracking in the approach bands in the 1990s that was one of the reasons for leaving it continued in the structurally deficient category for us also the the bearings uh some of those issues were issues that one could not go in and repair without uh it's very difficult to replace the bearings without jacking the entire bridge on this structure and the the the fact that bearings were not sliding uh was uh in the various studies was not not deemed to be a major issue [Music] um that that would be a question that i have to check on sorry i do not have that information yes ma'am the question is uh regarding the original company that built a bridge to my knowledge they're no longer in business it was industrial construction and i'm not familiar with that name so i think it has since gone out of business [Music] yes the the would be a combination of professional engineers and also technicians um that are familiar with non-destructive testing and also the inspection requirements so one of the one of the this inspectors are all certified so they have extensive experience even if they're not engineers they've had a wealth of experience that

[00:40:01 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=13qbAC6oGeI&t=2401s)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=13qbAC6oGeI&t=2401s)

they've had a wealth of experience that that by federal requirements they meet with they are certified inspectors but then on a bridge like this we always have an engineer part of the team too our inspection of the state of minnesota the minnesota department of transportation is in charge of bridges and bridge structures for the state and he has been handling a large portion of this news conference being held today led off by governor tim pawlenty who went over a number of things that he has demanded of mndot that they do immediately including a comprehensive redundant investigation by an outside firm of the investigation conducted by the national transportation safety bureau he wants to make sure that even though he trusts the national transportation safety bureau to come up with the right words about what happened yesterday at 605 over 35 w over the mississippi river he wants a redundant explanation and he's hired a forensic firm to come in and do that he's also asked that another inspection be done immediately on three bridges three bridges one crossing the uh saint croix river uh 123 243 rather 123 in the sandstone area and highway 23 or the mississippi river bridge in the saint cloud area the reason he wants those inspections done immediately is because they have very much the same kind of under deck trust suspension arch span as this bridge that just uh fell into the mississippi river now uh pat kessler joins us right now he spent a great deal of time with the governor today and one of the questions arises as it always does is politics and we heard 15 20 years ago the argument that the infrastructure of bridges in the united states this wasn't just a minnesota argument the argument took place all over the united states that was falling apart we're not putting enough money into all of this uh has this thing become political yet it has not and yet is the operative question because we've been talking to politicians of both parties republicans and democrats

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and democrats yesterday and today not a single one is willing yet to talk publicly about this until the recovery effort is complete that is until all of the bodies that are left and are taken out of the river no one wants to talk about politics certainly in minnesota in the last couple of years particularly in the election last year transportation funding is a very very big issue and it's a hot button issue as well right now however there's no indication that this is because of lack of funding that this bridge 35w went down with all those cars and all those people on it so yes politics is an issue but it is not yet the story here and it's going to be sometime maybe a day maybe a few days maybe a week before this actually becomes one when the politicians are ready to come out and start letting people know what they really think about this politically at the news conference today tim pawlenty uh i thought uh not in any effort to sidestep but to put into some perspective what would happen if they had decided in this legislative session or a previous legislative session to fund all of the money that it would take with the federal government's help to rebuild that i-35w bridge if they felt that it needed to be replaced which apparently no one in the engineering division of the bridges at mndot or any of the federal government people thought needed replacement to be replaced until 2020 if they had decided to let that money in the last session or or the one just passed nothing would have stopped this bridge from going into the water unless they had closed it down and they and temple only said there was no indication that that bridge needed to be closed down or limited only to be repaired with uh with an overlayment and they said just keep it going even though it uh did rank in 1990 and continue to be ranked as structurally deficient that's the language that we keep hearing in from these reports but when tom everett of the national bridge inspection program uh spoke he said structurally deficient should not be misread

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should not be misread to mean imminent danger it must be read as a programmatic termination terminology it is not about danger or replacement timetables well let's back up just a little bit because the secretary of transportation said something similar today she said secretary mayor mary peter said something similar that uh that it does not mean it's going to fall down immediately imminent danger however that structurally deficient does not sound that good we don't know exactly what that is yet we don't know what kinds of inspections exactly have been done we don't know exactly if there are hairline fractures if there was rust we don't know exactly what has happened yet so it's true as the governor says if they had appropriated money it takes several years to get a bridge project going and then built look at the wakota bridge south of the twin cities and yet if it was done three years ago or five years ago this would already have been replaced there are so many questions still to be answered here including was this bridge built in 1967 actually engineered and designed to carry this kind of traffic load 141 000 cars per day does this steel truss design actually hold that kind of traffic is the water underneath in the humidity and the salt and the spray does that have an effect on a bridge of this design these are things that the ntsb will try to put together the national traffic safety board they are in town 19 investigators are in town for this interestingly don they say and we're looking at this bridge right now they intend to take sections of this bridge out and we've been looking at that entire sections and reassemble this bridge on a separate site so that it is whole now they're going to lay it out in an area and put it together like a jigsaw puzzle to see if they can determine exactly what happened now we talk about imminent danger and this bridge was not in imminent danger take a look at it right now yeah pictures

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pictures uh say a thousand words i would i would think in the case like this there was also some con concern and and it may be something that the structural engineers will be looking at that the the decking of the viaduct leading up to the bridge not the bridge itself was also found to be structurally deficient if you look back to the north side toward the west bank you can see on the south side on the west bank you can see that there's a lot of that decking fell and when you watch uh the videotape the surveillance videotape security videotape i should call it of the bridge actually falling it does appear that it falls from the west bank before it falls to the east bank and so they're going to be looking at all of these things and i suppose the reconstruction is very similar to what they did in the lockerbie investigation where they found tiny fragments of those planes and reassembled them in a hangar to where the plane almost looked like something you could recognize as an airplane so i suppose as a matter of fact they talked just about that today don the ntsb said they're going to put it together almost exactly like they did in some of these major airline crashes this is one that they haven't seen quite before with this kind of steel design and we mentioned this there are the design is something we want to talk about investigating and the governor wants them inspected immediately but there are many many bridges in this state some estimate as many as 400 bridges in the state that maybe have some structural deficiencies whatever that means many many bridges in the state do have it our infrastructure is eroding over time and we're not replacing them as quickly as we once did and traffic and transit and all the commerce is getting bigger let me give you the figures that were announced today of the thirteen thousand bridges over twenty feet the state has control over eleven hundred and sixty are considered structurally structurally deficient just in our seven county metro area 106 out state which brings it to about 11 percent

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percent but in the country of the uh of all of the bridges in the united states 13 of all the bridges united states fit that structurally deficient category so we don't really know exactly what all of that means that's all going to have to be sorted out for us but pat i hope you continue to dig and listen to what the politicians are saying and see if there's a political solution to all of this whether this is more money for infrastructure or if it is uh simply getting together for a special session which the governor said he would not be uh opposed to calling it that is what is necessary he says he just doesn't know this yet it's certainly true that uh in now the debate on transportation has changed perhaps permanently in the state of minnesota if there is a special session even if there is not this is going to be the biggest issue the next time legislators meet i think what you're saying there pat and let me just interrupt you i think what you're saying there the the transportation debate has changed from uh roads uh from mass transit to roads and infrastructure for bridges and repairing and maintaining repairing building and mass transit all of that which has been a big issue until now very hot political issue is going to be the biggest issue in the state from now on all right pat thank you very much pat kessler working very hard all through the night and back in yet today and covering this story the probably the headline on this story other other than trying to find a description for this kind of uh language that they've been using about structural deficiencies is that there will be an immediate inspection of three bridges in the state that is the highway 23 bridge over the mississippi river in saint cloud in sandstone over the kettle river that trunk highway 123 in osceola the 243 bridge over the saint croix river we invite you to stay tuned throughout the day to wcco and also to go to wcco.com for to get continuing coverage here on wcco [Music]

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